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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses work training and employability of the mildly retarded in Australia, and reports on a pilot survey of patterns of employment of the mildly retarded. Employment prospects for the mentally handicapped are reviewed. Factors seen as influencing the employment of the mildly retarded include psychological variables, employer attitudes, and government and community attitudes. Types of employment available to the retarded are reviewed and are said to be limited to those at the bottom of the occupational scale. The benefits of work experience programs and prevocational training are discussed. The results of the survey on patterns of employment of the mildly retarded are presented in terms of social, educational, and vocational factors. (DLS)

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ABSTRACT

Work training and employability of the mildly retarded is discussed, with special reference to the outcome of an exemplary institution, the Granville Work Preparation Centre. Socio-vocational data were gathered on four contrasted groups of school-leavers. Results are discussed with reference to work preparation programs and general employment conditions. Product and process evaluation for future research into mild retardation and employability are outlined.

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Vocational Preparation for the Mildly Retarded:

An Investigation into Employment Patterns
and Related Factors^{1,2}

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INTRODUCTION

For some time now social policy has been directed towards providing the handicapped with as normal a life experience as possible; the so-called "normalization" concept. The background to this movement is extremely complex; and in it may be discerned not only a profound humanitarian concern, but considerable optimism as to the power of contemporary social engineering; particularly modern instructional techniques based on psychological learning theory which, having demonstrated their worth in a variety of settings, are now generally available.

A policy of normalization raises at least two related basic issues. The first of these refers to its more technical aspects; for instance, how much time does the handicapped person spend with his non-handicapped peers? are they educated in the same classroom? do they have access to the same curriculum opportunities? do they receive positive discrimination in the shape of extra programs, the attention of resource personnel, etc? In the field of special education these figure prominently in the current debates about "mainstreaming", e.g. Kaufman (1975): Deno (1973): Mosley and Spiker (1975). The second stems from the community's values regarding the handicapped, aged and mentally ill, and has as champions writers such as Wolfensberger (1972). The most extreme representation of this position would be that, irrespective of the severity of handicapping conditions, all should be educated and cared for openly within the community, a point of view which, of course, is not without its critics.

EXEMPLARY INSTITUTIONS

However, one of the most interesting aspects of normalization is the way in which it has forced a reappraisal of the roles and functions of professional workers in general and, also, of the expensive concentrations of resources exemplified by special schools, special classes and units within the normal school, learning assistance centres, experimental programs, etc. It is now evident that, in order to function effectively within a network of services, some of these will have to extend their functions

considerably by acquiring new roles and relinquishing those traditional activities which do not contribute in a reasonably cost-effective way to progress towards normalization. We think now of their functions as being exemplary in that they participate in:

- a) the construction of high quality generalizable programs;
- b) experimentation into the components of effective instructional and care provision;
- c) modelling up to date practice, particularly in the sense of providing laboratory situations where theory may be seen as translated into practice.
- d) serving the normalization principle directly by training personnel at all levels and integrating with other agencies in providing a service;
- e) disseminating ideas and results;
- f) catering for the most difficult or marginal cases for at least part of their work.

Exemplary institutions, therefore, are a function of creative people, goals, plans and ideas with an organizational structure sufficiently flexible for them to maintain a dynamic attack on their problem areas, points brought out cogently by Throne (1973) in discussing University Affiliated Facilities in the United States.

Thus the specialized institution operates and may be evaluated in a great many ways other than in terms of its ostensible basic purposes. And it is against such a conceptual background that we wish, therefore, to introduce this joint paper reporting preliminary materials and data from research into the functioning of a highly specialized institution; the Granville Work Preparation Centre for the retarded. Our purposes in presenting the paper are basically threefold: 1) to examine the general area of work training and the employability of the retarded; 2) to report some data from a pilot experiment designed to obtain basic socio-vocational information from four contrasted samples of school leavers and, finally,

3) to discuss these results in the light of the general conduct of the research, indicating the forms of future research and development. Before this, however, it would be appropriate to describe briefly the history of the project.

THE WORK PREPARATION CENTRE CONCEPT

It will be recalled that, as part of its rehabilitation service to the handicapped, the Australian Government Rehabilitation Service of the Department of Social Security set up pilot Work Preparation Centres at South Yarra, Victoria, and Granville, N.S.W. From their inception these projects were regarded as having a multi-dimensional approach incorporating vocational, social, medical and educational components in addition to work experience. Staffed by teams of highly qualified professionals, they were designed to provide highly individualized pre-vocational training for mildly retarded adolescents, particularly for those whose employability prospects were marginal. A distinctive feature of the approach is their emphasis upon the personal and social development of trainees, with a view to enhancing not only their future employability, but their capacity to function independently in adult society. Thus, in addition to facilities for both personal and vocational counselling (which incidentally has grown into a highly significant feature of the work) a wide variety of specific programs covering areas such as competence in travel, interpersonal relationships and self management are available.

As described by Limbrick (1975), therefore, the Centres have many of the components of the exemplary institution mentioned in our opening remarks. At this time, however, their research functions have been augmented, if not usurped, by the presence of two University-based teams; involving, in the case of the Granville Work Preparation Centre, a group from Macquarie University consisting of the four contributors, together with clerical staff.

THE GRANVILLE WORK PREPARATION CENTRE RESEARCH PROJECT

The research project at Granville has been funded, initially for three years, by the Department of Social Security who maintain a controlling and co-ordinating function through the Development and Special Projects Section Rehabilitation. Its broad aims are to identify the relevant populations of retarded young people in terms of their general educational and psychological characteristics and patterns of employment; to collaborate with the Centre in devising programs for rehabilitation and work preparation; to identify the components within those which make for optimal success; to carry out evaluation of the effectiveness of the Work Preparation Centre model. In summary, then, our research contains both formative and summative forms of evaluation, reflecting the pronounced developmental nature of the work. At present the Macquarie research has been in progress for twelve months. From the beginning we have conceived of the project as being highly important in many ways (some of which were perhaps not envisaged in the original proposals) and we hope that this brief account of our work thus far will convey its range and flavour and perhaps indicate our excitement at participating in a significant community enterprise.

1. EMPLOYMENT PROSPECTS FOR THE MENTALLY RETARDED

We have initially concerned ourselves with a consideration of the employability of the retarded and, like others, have found that there is overwhelming evidence that the majority of mildly retarded people are capable of stable and productive employment. It is inevitable that fluctuations in economic conditions depress the market for their services to some extent, but these must affect all the work force; although it has been claimed consistently that the mildly retarded are more adversely affected by recession, e.g. Goldstein (1964); Mahoney (1976).

Despite such changing economic conditions, however, the retarded seek and find placements in open industry on a very large scale, this being illustrated by the recent work of Conley (1974) who attempted to conduct cost-benefit analysis of their employability. Conley, in fact, found that

at any one point in time in the U.S., approximately 87% of mildly retarded males of working age are employed, compared with 91% for the general adult male work force. However, the picture for females is slightly less favourable: 35% of mildly retarded females as compared to 45% of female adults of working age.

What constitutes success in vocational adjustment is a matter for continuing debate, as a lack of uniformity in the criteria adopted by different researchers has made it difficult to arrive at a generally acceptable statement. For instance, some workers have used percentage employed at the time of the survey; others have used duration of employment; employment since leaving school; ability to keep a job or amount of take home pay. Moreover, caution is necessary when referring to representative studies from the current literature as these can vary markedly in their sample characteristics, e.g. in the proportions of institutionalized/non-institutionalized; rural/urban composition; ethnic group representation; severity of retardation and other handicaps. Even so, an optimistic view of the retardates employability is well justified, particularly if in addition to acquiring knowledge of efficient selection procedures, we can identify those specific skills and competencies which are necessary for fulfilling and satisfying work.

FACTORS INFLUENCING EMPLOYMENT OF THE RETARDED

a) Psychological Variables: Reviewing the factors related to successful employment, Mahoney (1976) discounted the predictive value of specific psychological variables such as intelligence, personality and background considering level of social competence and work performance, along with employer attitudes and current economic situation, as more important. We shall take a more positive view of psychological variables, but the difficulties inherent in evaluating data from the mildly retarded range are well known. Disproportionately large numbers of the mildly retarded population have sub-standard cultural backgrounds with low levels of medical care, nutrition and intellectual stimulation, c.f. Cobb 1972. Thus it has been recognised that associated intellectual deficit may be cultural rather

than constitutional in origin, a viewpoint given added strength by the pioneering work of Heber (1972) and other researchers in the area of early stimulation programs. Here longitudinal surveys are of special interest. In support of the environmental thesis, Baller, Charles and Miller (1967) found, for example, that their group of sub-normals studied over 30 years would have been more properly defined as 'culturally deprived'. Their adolescent and early adult years had been marked by delinquency, dependency on relief and generally poor adjustment. However, with time and opportunities to gain experience outside the home, most achieved a reasonably satisfactory adjustment.¹

b) Employer Attitudes: Employer attitudes can vary over time, but certainly affect the willingness to find suitable positions for the retarded. Recent research has identified a number of minor, but significant, components within this area. Mahoney's interesting report of a Victorian attitudinal survey of employers, for example, showed that larger organizations and younger personnel officers are more likely to employ the retarded than smaller firms or older employers. Once hired, the availability of a sympathetic, understanding supervisor appears to be a highly significant factor in the retention or non retention of the retarded worker.

c) Government and Community Attitudes: Governments and communities also vary in their sympathy for rehabilitation programs over times, and special legislation, or provision, incentives or policies may affect the employment situation of the retarded. Likewise, the breaking down of the work ethic, combined with the fluctuating economic situation and the motivation of the retarded to work or not work, are also factors to be considered.

TYPES OF EMPLOYMENT AVAILABLE TO THE RETARDED

Well documented evidence indicates that the types of job generally

1. General dissatisfaction with the definition of mild retardation has led to important modification to the categories of retardation listed in the last AAMD Handbook (Grossman, 1973).

available to the mentally retarded worker lie at the very bottom of the occupational scale, and pay considerably less than the jobs obtained by normal workers from similar socio-economic classes. For example, Heber and Dever (1970) suggested that graduates of special classes, although gaining employment, tend to be employed at the poverty level. Thus the apparently favourable picture of the special class graduates' employability is misleading, for mere ability to gain a job cannot be an overriding criterion for success. In support of this view, they found that the special class graduates not only lay at the lowest points on scales of occupational and social adjustment, but also that their quality of life compared to that of non retarded peers in comparable neighbourhoods was inferior. Within slum areas, for instance, it was the retarded who tended to occupy the worst housing and be recipients of the lowest incomes represented. Unfortunately, this pattern seems to be repeated in Australia, as judged from the study of Krupinski et al (1973) who investigated a group of mentally retarded persons in Victoria in 1962-1963 followed up in 1970. These workers found that the occupational potential of the retarded was not adequately utilized; within the groups considered potentially fully employable, 25.4% had been employed only for short periods of time, had changed their employment many times and had prolonged periods of unemployment. Of those judged capable of limited routine work, or "responsible assistance", 66.7% had never worked and another 31.4% had worked only sporadically. Among the group who were considered capable of work without constant supervision, 85.9% had, in fact, never worked.

The range of activities available to those in work was extremely limited, the majority being engaged in packing, carrying, general help and yard work. A further group was involved in simple forms of process work while the remainder carried out service functions such as domestic work or non-domestic cleaning. This type of finding is repeated in the work of Peterson and Smith (1960); Kennedy (1962); Martin (1969). A depressed employment position for female retardates is evident in the

Peterson & Smith study and also that of Gorelick (1968), both of which found evidence of their substantially reduced earning power.

Reasons for Dismissal: Not surprisingly, the issues surrounding the retarded person's frequent inability to hold down a job have received considerable attention. And here, although he was more directly concerned with the problems of moderately retarded, Gold (1973) made an extremely important point. He argued that the boring and personally destructive nature of many of the jobs which the retarded do, contributes materially to the finding that they are dismissed, not for inability to perform set tasks, but for reasons of social inadequacy or odd behaviour. In fact, many are being asked to perform at a level well below their potential and react accordingly. The conclusion must be that, only when the retarded receive training adequate for them to experience job fulfillment via interesting and demanding work, will it be possible to isolate the effects of inadequate personality and poor social adjustment in any meaningful way.

THE EFFECTS OF WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAMS

Pre-vocational training and work experience programs are gaining greater acceptance as a realistic and natural approach to preparing the adolescent for adult life. Indeed, in the U.S., the Career Development Centre movement which attempts to focus student attention on career possibilities and potential has its roots in the philosophy that pre-vocational preparation should be an integral part of the educational process from kindergarten onwards. The latter view may be unacceptable to many, but evidence is accumulating which supports the work experience concept. Chaffin et al (1971) for instance, analysed the results of two follow-up studies carried out in Kansas and which were designed to provide educable mentally retarded students with both educational and pre-vocational experiences. He reported that, although there appeared to be little difference in the level of employment found for these students as compared with that of a control group, the work experience program did lead to quicker job placement, more extended periods of employment and higher

earnings. This type of finding is of course amenable to cost-benefit analysis and recently Muth and Singell (1975) have studied the long term accumulative effect of the income differential between experimental and control groups. Assuming that the wage differential continued for five years at the same rate, they found a very substantial difference in wages received even after program costs were deducted.

Not surprisingly, therefore, there has been a rapid growth of work experience programs for both regular and special school classes in Australia in the 1970's as attested to by The Report of the Working Party on the Transition from Secondary Education to Employment (1976). Whilst many of these programs are being conducted on a short term basis mainly for job sampling purposes, a significant number designed for handicapped adolescents involve longer periods of on the job training supported by an integrated academic and social program at the school level. An interesting pilot project where employers are being reimbursed under the NEAT¹ scheme for their participation in work experience programs for retarded and hearing disabled groups has been initiated by the Federal Department of Employment and Industrial Relations and the N.S.W. Department of Education. Before this and similar programs are multiplied indiscriminantly, Parmenter (1975) has suggested that studies be carried out to evaluate their effectiveness at both the school and job level. It would be a pity if such programs simply became elaborate job placement exercises, for already they are under strong competition from schemes for the regular school leaver; mounted to ameliorate the current chronic youth unemployment position. As this is likely to be a long term problem, it would be prudent not to anticipate a significant expansion of this type of vocational preparation; a fact already noted by the Working Party which doubted industry's capacity to provide suitable work experience for all students.

1. National Employment and Training Scheme

2. SURVEY OF PATTERNS OF EMPLOYMENT OF THE MILDLY RETARDED

Aim: The aims of the pilot survey were:

- a) to obtain data on the patterns of employment within the Granville Work Preparation Centre group and to compare them with those from other groups of school leavers, including normal job seekers, and
- b) to examine factors which may be presumed to affect employability both within and across the defined groups.

Method: The design of the survey consisted of three comparison groups:

Granville Work Preparation Centre; Special Schools; Special Classes and a contrast group of fourth form school leavers from Regular State High Schools.

Sample

All samples were randomly selected from the Granville Work Preparation Centre feeder area. This incorporated the Sydney areas of Bankstown, Blacktown, Burwood, Campbelltown, Caringbah, Fairfield, Granville, Hurstville, Leichhardt, Liverpool, Parramatta, Penrith and Ryde.

a) Granville Work Preparation Centre (GWPC)

The composition of the G.W.P.C. sample was diverse, drawing as it did adolescents from Special Schools, Special Classes and Regular High Schools. (see Table 1). The majority of these were referred direct from schools to the Centre, but a small proportion of cases had already gained employment, failed and were then referred by agencies, social workers or parents who saw the need for specialized training.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE Referral Sources to G.W.P.C.

b) Schools

The remaining samples were randomly selected from the 1974/75 school leavers of Special Schools for the mildly retarded, Special Classes, and fourth form leavers from Regular High Schools. These students had gone directly from school to the employment market.

Sample characteristics of all groups are listed in Table 2.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

VARIABLES

i. Factors Related to Employment Patterns:

Factors were selected from a search of the research literature and from consultation with vocational specialists working in the field. It was anticipated that they would include the best potential descriptors available in the information accessible from records and other data. The factors may be considered in terms of three main categories:

- a) Social: sex
 age at leaving school
 special disability
 father's occupation
 mother employed (full or part-time)
 size of family and position in family
 possession of bank account
- b) Educational: assessed I.Q.
 vocational tests
 school certificate
 academic achievement
 vocational training
 work experience programs at school
- c) Vocational: job satisfaction
 travel time
 reasons for leaving jobs
 types of assistance sought in finding jobs

ii. Patterns of Employment

A variety of indices was chosen to reflect the quantity and quality of the jobs the respondents had pursued during the two years under study. These

were as follows:

- a) the amount of time spent in employment since leaving school.
- b) the amount of unemployment with allowances for time spent in job training (e.g. G.W.P.C. training, apprenticeship training, technical and secretarial college course).
- c) the type of job (as classified by a modified Congalton "Status and Prestige in Australia" rating scale).
- d) amount of take home pay in each job
- e) the number of periods of employment and unemployment
- f) whether open or sheltered employment

It is envisaged that this description of employment patterns and the related factors, when considered in the light of other conditions prevailing in the community, such as economic climate, Government policies and employer attitudes, may overcome many of the methodological problems associated with evaluating employability.

Procedure

Data were collected on each subject in two ways. Firstly, schools and the G.W.P.C. were approached to provide details on subject characteristics such as academic attainments, psychometric tests, special disabilities and family position. Secondly, a questionnaire requesting details of job patterns and job characteristics was mailed, together with a reply paid envelope, to all subjects in the four samples with covering letters explaining the purpose of the study and stressing the confidentiality of individual responses. Non returns were followed up by mail and telephone and, in the case of the G.W.P.C. group, by personal visits to their homes.

Return Rates:

Return rates for questionnaires totalled 69% overall, but between groups the highest return rates came from the G.W.P.C. group and the Regular High School sample. Lowest, at 52%, was the Special Class sample. The return rate was depressed by the higher number of forms returned "address unknown" from Special Class and Special School samples (16.5% and 15.6% respectively)

versus 5.4% for the Regular High School sample and 3.9% for G.W.P.C.

Where change of address had occurred in the Regular High School sample, notification of forwarding address was generally supplied. This was not the case with the Special Class and Special School samples, who appeared more transient and less stable with regard to their domicile than the Regular High School leavers.

Observations were also made as to the lower quality of the housing for mildly retarded groups during follow up to obtain higher response rates and/or complete forms where information had been omitted or reading difficulties had occurred.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

(a) SOCIAL FACTORS

Sex Differences

Sex differences between the four groups were minimal. However, considerably more males than females were selected. This disproportionately higher number of males in the Special Schools and Classes probably reflects the selection problems of Special Schools and Classes for the mildly retarded.

Age Differences

Age differences between samples at time of leaving school were examined, and Regular High School fourth form leavers were found to be generally older than the three mildly retarded groups on this variable. It is of note that the Special Class sample was twelve months younger than the Regular High School sample when they first entered the employment market and 4 to 6 months younger than the other mildly retarded samples.

As a result of G.W.P.C. having training for periods between 2 and 36 months and, also, as some had had prior employment, they were considerably older at the nominal time of the survey (30/6/76).

Disabilities

With respect to disabilities, caution is warranted when commenting on the relative status of each group, as many school records were incomplete and such data as were available often lacked specificity.¹ Comparing the groups for total number of individuals with disabilities, Granville has the highest total disability rate of 61.6%, and the Regular High School sample a considerably lesser number at 21%. The major differences between groups lie in the multiple and emotional/psychological categories and it may be this factor which accounts for the greater percentage of the Granville and Special School samples finding their way to Sheltered Employment settings.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Father's Occupation

Father's occupation was ranked on Congalton's (1969) seven point scale, modified to incorporate degree of absence of father from the home situation, and was taken as defining socio-economic status of the family. The Regular High School group was highest in status, being made up mainly of white-collar and skilled workers, whilst there were little differences between the mildly retarded groups who were made up of semi and unskilled workers. The Granville group has a disproportionate number of families where the father had died or was absent during schooling. This might suggest a more deprived socio-economic background for a number of the Granville sample, especially the males who had 33% in this category as against 25% of the females.

Mother's Occupation

Mother's Occupation was rated on a 5 point scale based on absence from

1. Incidence and not severity of disability was, therefore, computed.

the home environment; Domestic Duties being rated lowest absence, followed by part-time work/full time, with deceased, divorced/absent the highest. Only small differences existed between the groups. The Regular High Schools group had the least mother's absence from home whilst the Special School group had the highest. The Granville group and Special Class group fell between these extremes.

Size of, and Position in Family

The effect of the size of, and position in, the family on employability was assumed to be modified by the sex of the individual. Any meaningful analysis of family size and position is in itself a notoriously difficult task (Nystal 1976) and lack of an undimensional criterion for successful employment precluded analysis.

Possession of Bank Account

It was assumed that the degree to which a person controls his or her own finances reflected an index of independence from family supervision. The owning and operating of bank accounts was found to be about 60% for the retarded groups compared with 82% for the Regular High School leavers, indicating no differences in independent living between the mildly retarded groups, but reflecting a difference between the mildly retarded groups and the Regular High School leavers. This is further substantiated by findings on job seeking and job placement activities.

(b) EDUCATIONAL

Assessed I.Q.

The assessed I.Q.'s taken from School Record Cards were not strictly comparable, as they consisted of scores taken from a number of different groups and individual tests administered at different ages throughout the school system. Notwithstanding these obvious psychometric limitations for the mean Assessed I.Q., the Regular High School group reflected the standardized norm of the general population, and all of the mildly retarded groups fell within conventionally acceptable ranges for Mild Retardation, i.e. I.Q. scores of 55 to 80.

Vocational Tests

Vocational Guidance Bureau test results were not generally available from School Record Cards for all groups, especially the mildly retarded groups. The Regular High School group had the highest incidence of VGB results, but these were not amenable to analysis as they frequently lacked sufficient information for comparisons to be made.

School Certificate

No mildly retarded adolescent had sat for the School Certificate. The Regular High School group's results were in part available, but not comparable as the 1975 School Certificate had been changed to a decile rating system. The majority of the Regular High School group had sat for and gained a School Certificate under one or the other rating systems.

Academic Achievement

Achievement test results, e.g. comprehension, reading and spelling, for all groups were taken from School History Cards but, once again, were not comparable as a variety of different tests were used, e.g. reading - Schonell, Daniels-Diack, A.C.E.R. It was obvious that the mildly retarded groups performed at a far lower level than the Regular High School group. However, it is evident that such differences between individuals and groups would be more educationally relevant if the tests were based on functional criteria in specific areas such as reading, numeration, time-telling, skills, etc. This applied particularly to the mildly retarded group whose performance on standardized tests are often not reliable indicators of functional performance, the tests having been standardized on normal populations with a corresponding lack of sensitivity for those subjects at the lower ends of the distributions.

Vocational Training

Vocational training prior to employment or G.W.P.C. training was much more prevalent in the Regular High School group than the mildly retarded groups. Full-time attendance at Technical or Secretarial College accounted for 10 of the Regular High School group (mean time in training 9.9 months) whilst the Granville group had two people with prior training of six and nine months.

each; the Special Classes one person for three months and the Special Schools had no persons in training.

Formal Vocational Training through apprenticeships was confined to the Regular High School and Special Class groups. The Regular High School leavers had 27 people enter apprenticeships, compared to 2 for the Special Classes.

Work Experience Programs at School

Within the mildly retarded groups, work experience was obtained by 24% of the Special School group, 15.2% of the Granville group and NIL of the Special Class group. The Regular High School group had 5.2% involved in some work experience whilst at school, but as mentioned earlier, the Regular High School programs are more short-term and of a job sampling nature than the mildly retarded programs and, therefore, not strictly comparable.

(c) VOCATIONAL

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction was measured on a 5 point scale ranging from 1. "I thought it was great" to 5. "I hated it". Only small variations existed between groups on this dimension with the mean for all groups falling between 2. "I liked it a fair bit" and 3. "It was alright". The Special Class group liked Job 1 the least and, furthermore, was the only group whose subjective liking decreased between Jobs 1 and 2, whilst all other groups increased their subjective liking.

Opinions as to how well the job was done were rated on a 3 point scale ranging from 1. "I did it really well" to 3. "I did not do it very well". There were only small differences between groups as to how well they considered they did the jobs, the group means falling between 1. "I did it really well" and 2. "I did it O.K.".

Travelling Time

Only slight differences in mean travelling time exist between all groups, although there is clearly wide variability in travelling time within the total sample (10 to 140 minutes).

Reasons for Leaving Jobs

Reasons for leaving jobs were dichotomised into self-initiated and employer initiated. There are considerable differences between the groups (see Tables 6 & 7) and these are discussed with other relevant factors later under Job 1 and Job 2 headings.

Types of Assistance Sought in Finding Jobs

There are distinctly different patterns evident in the way jobs are obtained. The Regular High School sample is more independent of parents, school or Government Agencies in locating jobs for themselves, whereas the Special School and Class samples utilized School Counsellors, parents and friends to locate jobs and, to some extent, Government Agencies. The G.W.P.C. utilizes Government Agencies almost exclusively.

EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS

Listed in Table 4 are the major aspects of employment in a *General Employment Summary*. *Full Employment* is defined as being in a full-time job from time leaving school or GWPC until nominal date of survey, with no unemployment history. *Intermittent Employment* is periodic employment, that is, periods of both employment and unemployment within the *Potential Employment*.

Potential Employment time for each group was calculated by subtracting age at leaving school from age at time of survey. For the Granville sample, time spent in training programs at the W.P.C. was also extracted.

INSERT TABLE 4 HERE

Differences in Mean Potential Employment Time between the school samples are explained by the different times during the academic school year that the various groups leave for the employment market. Both the Regular and Special Class samples tend to leave school at the end of the academic year, the Special Class sample leaving slightly earlier as they do not sit for School Certificate examinations. The Special School sample tend to leave school when they achieve school leaving age or when they are placed in employment as

part of the Special School's vocational program. The Granville sample left the training program either by placement into sheltered or open employment, or by being suspended or terminated from training.

The type of education and the time of leaving school affect the time unemployment before obtaining a first job (UE1). The Regular School sample had a mean period of 3.2 months unemployment after school, and this appears to reflect a tendency for 4th Form Regular School-leavers to take Xmas vacations before seeking work as well as the effect of the Xmas seasonal fluctuation in the employment market. There is little difference between the mildly retarded samples in the time taken to obtain their first job, but these samples take considerably longer than the Regular sample, possibly reflecting lack of job seeking skills on the part of the mildly retarded School and Class samples, as well as employer reticence in starting mildly retarded job seekers. The Granville sample had the highest proportion (60.9%) enter immediate employment and remain fully employed. Those who failed to obtain immediate employment took considerable time to find jobs and, as the Granville trainees relied heavily on job placement by the G.W.P.C. or related Government Employment Agencies, e.g. C.E.S. (82.4% of the sample), it may be that the Granville job seeking skills program relies too much on institutionalized means of job placement, rather than training for more independent and innovative alternatives for finding jobs in a tight employment market. The reliance on institutionalized job placement by the G.W.P.C. may, in fact, foster a trainee's dependency on the Centre, resulting in a lack of motivation to leave there and enter open employment. Failure in jobs results in contacting the Centre in a majority of cases and subsequent placement by Government Agencies (see Table 6 - Placement).

The Regular High School group has the highest average total open-employment time (8.0 months), whereas Granville has the least with 6.2 months. This is modified by Granville having the highest percentage (25.1) of leavers entering sheltered workshops which are regarded as effective placements by the Department of Social Security. Granville also has the lowest mean number of

employment periods of any group and, together with the Regular High School leavers, less total months unemployed than the Special School and Class groups.

The Granville, Regular and Special School groups appear to have only small differences in their employment patterns once employment commences, whereas the Special Class group has the highest total unemployment average of 6.1 months. This, together with having the greatest number of job changes (41.5%) and lowest pay, would indicate that the Special Class group has the least stability in employment patterns.

Sex differences in employment patterns vary between the groups. Females in the Granville and Regular High School groups have longer total unemployment periods than males, whereas in the Special Class group this is reversed. The Special School females have more variation in total employment period than males, and Special School females have a greater percentage of short-term total employment than males, as well as more jobs. Sex differences regarding total employment periods for Special Class and Regular High School groups are minimal.

The Regular High School group had higher job status than the mildly retarded groups. In order to elucidate the differences in status, Table 5 has been compiled for all jobs undertaken during Potential Employment Time and shows the breakdown of jobs by type of industry. It should be noted that the G.W.P.C. jobs reflect the vocational training presently available in the Centre.

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

The complexity of the above data indicates the need for the establishment of generally accepted indices of employment incorporating both quantitative and qualitative aspects of data relating to an individual's employment history. These would permit meaningful comparisons

between studies on employment and would alleviate many of the methodological problems associated with surveys of the type mentioned earlier in the paper.

JOB 1

INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE

Slight differences exist between the four groups in respect of average months employed in Job 1, take home pay, and daily (one-way) travelling time. The Granville group has the highest take home pay, but travels the farthest. This may reflect the influence of the Centre's & C.E.S.'s job placement efforts mentioned earlier. The higher job status of the Regular High School group reflects the fathers' higher job status.

It has already been noted that the Special Class sample appears less stable than the other three groups with more job changes and more unemployment. Of the number who entered Job 1, 53.7% left after an average of 6.4 months employment. Of this group leaving, 50% gave the reason as laid-off or fired, 18% disliked the working conditions, another 18% had reasons of family, or seeking a better job, desired a change or pregnancy reasons, and a further 14% disliked the pay or travelling conditions.

Little difference is evident in the numbers leaving Job 1 between the other three groups. However, there are differences in the reasons why they leave. More of the Special School sample was laid off or fired (57.2%), G.W.P.C. 30.8%, Regular High Schools 36%. Granville Group reported that they were unhappy with the working conditions (G.W.P.C. 38.5%, Regular High Schools 20%, Special Class 18.2%, Special School 14.3%). More Regular High Schools were concerned with promotion or finding jobs they felt had greater potential for the future, or left for family reasons (Regular High Schools 32.0%, Special

Classes 18.2%, G.W.P.C. 15.4%, Special Schools 14.3%).

Pay and travelling time were not as significant as expected as listed reasons for job change, and were relatively consistent across all groups.

Sex differences appear in the Regular High Schools groups with females on average achieving a higher job status than males. In the Granville group, the females tend to remain in Job 1 for less time than the males.

JOB 2

INSERT TABLE 7 ABOUT HERE

More special class groups entered Job 2 than the other groups, but on the average stayed a much shorter time in Job 2 (Special Class 3.0 months, Special School 3.7 months, Regular High School 5.8 months, G.W.P.C. 8.1 months). The Granville sample, on the other hand, stayed the longest in Job 2.

The Special Class group was also in receipt of the lowest pay of all groups, while the Granville sample had the highest average pay, despite the fact that the Regular High Schools had the highest job status. This meant the Special Class sample was the only group to decrease in pay with job change - all other groups increased pay from Job 1 to Job 2.

Government Agencies were, as mentioned earlier, relied upon by the G.W.P.C. sample for job placement, while the Regular High School and Special School samples were more independent in finding their own jobs or utilized parents and friends. The Special Class group utilized both Government agencies and school counsellors in finding a second job more than the other group.

Of those subjects leaving Job 2, many gave the reason as laid off or fired. This was particularly the case with the Special School and Special Class samples (14.7% & 6%).

The Granville group had 25% of its females in the lowest job status, as against NIL % of its men, and no other group had any of its members in the lower status jobs. Granville females also stayed for shorter periods in

Job 2, but earned more money than the men. The low status jobs the Granville females took may be a result of G.W.P.C. industrial programs for females being aimed at an area where there are no prospects for females at the present time.

JOBS 3 & 4

INSERT TABLE 8 ABOUT HERE

The frequency of job change and unemployment continued to be higher for the Special Class group. Granville appears to be the most stable with the least number out of work, and the most remaining in the first or second job. Further interpretations are not warranted, owing to the small numbers entering Jobs 3 & 4.

3. CONCLUSIONS

In summary, it appears that during the first two years operation G.W.P.C. has been drawing its trainees from Special Schools which usually serve the more disabled of the mildly retarded population. Of the 4 groups, Granville has placed the highest percentage in sheltered employment, and with this considered as effective employment, their sample have a job stability comparable with the Regular High School sample. The job stability is indicated by having lower total unemployment and number of unemployment periods than the other mildly retarded groups. There is a trend in the Granville group to suggest improvement of job status and pay when they change jobs, which appears to be as a result of disliking the job and conditions. The other retarded groups are more prone to being laid off or dismissed and it may be that the specific counselling programs at Granville have had some useful effect. The Special Class group has had the greatest number of unemployment periods and has other indications of being the least stable group vocationally. This may be a result of less awareness of and attention to vocational training courses for the mildly retarded educated in Regular Schools' Special Classes and may also reflect lack of resources within these establishments. There were no consistent patterns regarding sex differences, although in the Granville group females achieved

overall slightly lower job status. This finding supports studies mentioned earlier in this report, viz. Peterson & Smith (1960), Gorelick (1968), Kupinski (1973).

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study into patterns of employment is only one of a number of projects capable of major expansion. However, our overall research may be seen as having two basic functions. The first of these is that of product evaluation which may be performed by analysing the relative success, in the sense of vocational and personal development, of the graduates from the Granville program, and which requires that we arrive at a definition of employability which can be translated into reliable assessment procedures. The second, and possibly the more important in terms of the Granville Centre's exemplary function, is process evaluation, particularly with regard to the effectiveness of specific programs. Here it is likely that co-operative efforts between research teams and Centre staff will lead to the most useful efforts at further development and consequent opportunities for dissemination. To this end several experimental programs have been already initiated and more will follow as extra resources in the shape of postgraduate students become available.

Returning to the pilot study it is anticipated that, even at this early stage, our analysis will enable us to identify variables capable of being used to maximise the Centre's all round effectiveness. For instance, our data on the patterns of employment should, even under the present economic constraints, assist in determining the selection of contracts. And here we would agree with Gold's (1973) assertion that contracts should be sought for their training potential, not simply for their 'busy work' or profit making characteristics. A productive application of this principle might, therefore, be of supplying a range of job stations each dealing with a group of core skills representative of the broad types of employment into which the trainees will proceed. Of course it has to be accepted that as employment patterns change so will there have to be corresponding changes

to the work skill programs: indeed if current employment prospects for unskilled workers continue to worsen, a radical redefinition of 'work' may be required anyway!

Techniques of Evaluation

We have already referred to the need for adequate criterion measures. Comprehensive programs of evaluation clearly demand the use of a wide range of techniques from conventional norm - referenced tests to personalized assessment and direct observations. Here a contentious issue concerns the usefulness of batteries of screening tests for determining entry into the Centre's programs, as testing of the differential variety is continually under fire, c.f. Cobb (1972), Gold (1973). Nevertheless, we find the concept of individual aptitude/treatment interactions appealing and intend to examine whether highly specific 'work sample' tests will enable us to predict more accurately the types of program to which trainees will optimally respond. In addition, we shall collect comprehensive data as to individual performance characteristics so as to detect any deficit areas which might be improved by specific instructional programs. It is also essential that data be gathered on the environmental factors which are related to both work skill and social program of the Granville population once they are in the normal work force and our field work will, therefore, include direct observations of trainees in real life situations. Once identified, some of the salient environmental variables may be explored under the more rigorous control available within the Centre. The area of social competence is one which clearly merits a more detailed scrutiny. For example, the study of components, or interactions of components which are involved in the social aspects of employability could give rise to a great many independent researches. However, as a modest beginning, we are asking perhaps a more fundamental question which derives from Gold's (1973) radical suggestion that skill acquisition enhances self concept and social adjustment rather than the reverse. To test this hypothesis we will be directly involved in the Centre's attempts to individualize instruction through identifying skill hierarchies,

setting goals within them and developing measures which will contribute to data-based decisions.

The bias of much of the work will, therefore, be programmatic. However, supplementary basic research into the affective, cognitive and motor areas is being planned. Examples of this will include a study into the impulsivity/reflexivity dimension of personality; an examination of decision making processes in the retarded and ergonomic approaches to skilled performance via procedures such as Methods/Time Measurement. The research will also generate many opportunities for experimental analyses of individual learning in which the effects of variation of antecedent stimuli, sequence of presentation, reinforcement, and knowledge of results may be readily studied.

Follow up. Possibly the most striking impression gained during our short association with the project has been of the paucity of all forms of data concerning the retarded: in particular we have noted a dearth of local research evidence in the area of rehabilitation. During the currency of the research we intend, therefore, to set up mechanisms whereby graduates of the Granville Centre may be followed up over an extended period and data collected on a large number of variables; some by personal interviewing of the sample. To complement this, we have already commenced to gather information on the way in which the economic factors affect employability and we hope to introduce a system which will make these data more easily available.

Attitudes towards normalization

A general problem to which we will shortly address ourselves is that of the community's (and employers') attitudes towards normalization. And, as many of these attitudes may originate at the school level, questionnaires for a state-wide survey of the attitudes of school principals have been constructed and will be sent out in the near future. The results from this large scale study may well prove revealing.

Finally, we wish to make the point that the development of effective delivery will require planned variations in the models involved and, in particular, experimentation at the interfaces of sub-systems; thus the

possibilities for sociological analyses and operational research are legion. Study of the Granville Centre's exemplary function will obviously require this type of conceptualization. However, what is really significant, irrespective of the type of organisation structures involved, is the quality of programs available and the level of skill of those concerned in their application. If we could make a major contribution here, however indirect, this would provide us with our greatest source of satisfaction.

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TABLE 1

Referral Sources to Granville W.P.C. to 30/6/76

Special Schools	65%
Government Agencies	20%
Special Classes	5%
Regular Schools	4%
Social Workers	4%
Parents, Friends	2%
	<u>100%</u>

TABLE 2

Sample Characteristics

	Granville W.P.C. N = 46	Special Schools N = 50	Special Classes N = 41	Regular High Schools N = 96
$\bar{X}$ Age Leaving School	15 yrs 8 mths	15 yrs 6 mths	15 yrs 2 mths	16 yrs 2 mths
$\bar{X}$ Age 30/6/76	18 yrs	17 yrs	16 yrs 4 mths	17 yrs 1 mth
Sex	(M F 54.4% 45.6%)	(M F 68% 32%)	(M F 61% 39%)	(M F 55.2% 44.8%)

TABLE 3

Summary of Social Factors and Disabilities

	Granville W.P.C. N = 46	Special Schools N = 50	Special Classes N = 41	Regular High Schools N = 96
Father's Occupation (Congalton's scale)	$\bar{X}$ 6.85	$\bar{X}$ 5.7	$\bar{X}$ 6.24	$\bar{X}$ 5.23
Mother's Occupation	$\bar{X}$ 2.0	$\bar{X}$ 2.1	$\bar{X}$ 1.66	$\bar{X}$ 1.57
Bank A/cs:				
None	11%	6%	26%	9%
Yes - Don't operate	32%	36%	15%	9%
Yes - Operates Self	57%	58%	59%	82%
Disabilities				
Multiple	21.6%	20%	7%	-
Physical	20%	26%	27%	15%
Psychological/Emotional	20%	10%	7%	6%
Total Disabilities	61.6%	56%	41%	21%

TABLE 4
General Employment Summary

	Granville W.P.C. N = 46	Special School N = 50	Special Class N = 41	Regular High School N = 96
Mean Potential Employment Time Since Leaving School/Granville	15.1 mnths	16.3 mnths	13.9 mnths	12.4 mnths
Mean Total Employment (excluding Sheltered Workshop)	6.2 mnths	7.7 mnths	6.7 mnths	8.0 mnths
Mean Total Unemployment	2.4 mnths	5.6 mnths	6.1 mnths	3.3 mnths
In Full Employment	60.9%	28.0%	24.4%	19.8%
In Sheltered Employment	26.1%	20.0%	7.3%	-
In Intermittent Employment	10.9%	46.0%	58.5%	69.8%
No Employment	2.2%	6.0%	9.8%	10.4%

EMPLOYMENTS

% Employed One Job Only	54.4%	62.0%	41.5%	67.7%
% Employed in Two Jobs	15.2%	4.0%	36.6%	15.6%
% Employed in Three Jobs	2.2%	8.0%	-	6.3%
% Employed in Four Jobs	-	-	4.9%	-

EMPLOYMENTS

Average Months in Job 1	6.6 mnths	7.4 mnths	6.4 mnths	7.8 mnths
Average Months in Job 2	8.1 mnths	3.7 mnths	3.0 mnths	5.8 mnths
Average Months In Job 3	2.0 mnths	4.5 mnths	2.5 mnths	3.5 mnths

UNEMPLOYMENTS

% No Unemployments	60.9%	28.0%	24.4%	19.8%
% One Unemployment Period Only	28.2%	54.0%	39.0%	65.6%
% Two Unemployment Periods	10.9%	16.0%	29.3%	8.3%
% Three Unemployment Periods	-	-	4.9%	4.2%

Average Months Unemployment 1	4.75 mnths	5.2 mnths	5.0 mnths	3.2 mnths
Average Months Unemployment 2	4.27 mnths	6.0 mnths	5.8 mnths	2.8 mnths
Average Months Unemployment 3	-	1.0 mnths	5.0 mnths	2.1 mnths

TABLE 5

Employment: Types and Frequency of Jobs

	Granville W.P.C. N = 46		Special Schools N = 50		Special Classes N = 41		Regular High Schools N = 96	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
<u>Factory</u>								
Packers, Sweepers, Cleaners	1	2	2	1	5	6	3	1
Labourer - General Hand	7	-	3	-	3	-	7	-
Process Workers/Assemblers	2	5	5	3	6	4	4	
Machinists - welders, metal grinders	11	1	-	-	2	-	1	-
Clothing - cutters, Machinists	-	5	-	3	2	6	-	2
<u>Services</u>								
Deliverer	3	-	1	2	1	1	1	-
Detailers, etc.	3	-	5	-	3	-	3	-
Nurses Aide	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
<u>Retail</u>								
Shop Asst/Sales	1	2	2	2	3	1	-	15
Stacking	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	-
<u>Agriculture</u>								
Labourer/fencers	1	-	6	-	4	1	3	1
Timber Workers	1	-	3	-	2	-	-	-
Abattoir Workers	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
<u>Domestic</u>								
Mothers Help, etc.	-	2	-	1	-	1	-	2
Cooks, Caterers, etc.	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
<u>Building</u>								
Labourers, Brick Cleaners	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Apprentices	-	-	-	-	2	-	27	1
<u>Clerical</u>								
Clerk, Office Asst., Typist	-	2	-	1	-	1	3	22
Receptionist	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Banking	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	5
<u>Professional</u>								
Data Processing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Photography	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-
Nurse	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
<u>Armed Services</u>								
	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
TOTALS	31	21	29	15	35	22	60	55

TABLE 6

JOB 1 - SUMMARY

	Granville W.P.C. N = 46	Special School N = 50	Special Class N = 41	Regular High School N = 96
% Entering Job 1	71.7%	92.0%	82.9%	89.6%
Average Months In Job 1	6.6 mnths	7.4 mnths	6.4 mnths	7.8 mnths
Average Weekly Take Home Pay	\$63.50	\$58.00	\$54.10	\$58.00
Average Daily Travel - one way	53 mins	41 mins	37 mins	41 mins
Average Job Status on 7 point scale, With 7 lowest status on scale	6	6	6	5
<u>JOB 1 PLACEMENT</u>				
Gained Job By Self	2.9%	11.1%	21.2%	41.7%
Placed through Parents/Friends	5.9%	38.9%	18.2%	36.9%
Placed through Government Agencies	82.4%	22.2%	33.3%	21.4%
Placed through Private Agencies	5.9%	-	-	-
Placed through School Counsellors	2.9%	27.8%	27.3%	-
Percentage Leaving Job 1	28.3%	28.0%	53.7%	26.0%
<u>REASONS FOR LEAVING</u>				
a) Self Initiated for				
1) Pay, Travelling Conditions	15.4%	14.2%	13.7%	12.0%
2) Disliked Working Conditions	38.5%	14.3%	18.2%	20.0%
3) Miscellaneous	15.4%	14.3%	18.1%	32.0%
b) Fired, Laid Off	30.7%	57.2%	50.0%	36.0%

TABLE 7

JOB 2 - SUMMARY

	Granville W.P.C. N = 46	Special School N = 50	Special Class N = 41	Regular High School N = 96
Number entering Unemployment 2	10.9%	18.0%	36.6%	14.6%
<u>JOB 2</u>				
No. entering Job 2	17.4%	12.0%	41.5%	21.9%
Average Months Job 2	8.1 mnths	3.7 mnths	3.0 mnths	5.8 mnths
Average Weekly Take Home Pay	\$73.70	\$64.30	\$51.40	\$63.20
Average Daily Travel Time - one way	55 mins	37 mins	53 mins	50 mins
Average Job Status	6	6	6	5
<u>JOB 2 PLACEMENT</u>				
Found Job Self	-	6.0%	12.2%	10.4%
Placed through Parents/Friends	2.2%	4.0%	-	8.3%
Placed through Government Agencies	10.9%	2.0%	19.6%	3.1%
Placed through Private Agencies	-	-	-	-
Placed through School Counsellors	4.3%	-	9.8%	-
% Leaving Job 2	2.2%	8.0%	34.2%	10.4%
<u>REASONS FOR LEAVING</u>				
a) Self Initiated for				
1) Pay, Travelling Conditions	-	2.0%	4.9%	2.1%
2) Disliked Working Conditions	-	-	9.8%	1.0%
3) Miscellaneous	-	-	4.9%	3.1%
b) Fired, Laid Off	2.2%	6.0%	14.7%	4.2%

TABLE 8

JOBS 3 & 4 - SUMMARY

	Granville W.P.C. N = 46	Special School N = 50	Special Class N = 41	Regular High School N = 96
Number Entering Unemployment 3	-	2.0%	7.3%	6.3%
Number Entering Job 3	2.2%	8.0%	4.9%	6.3%
Number Entering Unemployment 4	-	2.0%	2.4%	2.1%
Number Entering Job 4	-	-	4.9%	-